



News from Congressman

Tom Lantos

**12th Congressional District of California
San Mateo/San Francisco**

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LANTOS PROTEST LEADS TO RELEASE OF TIBETAN NUN BY CHINESE AUTHORITIES ***Ngawang Sangdrol, Tibet's Longest Serving Female Political Prisoner, Freed After Lantos Raises Case***

Washington, D.C. - Congressman Tom Lantos (D-San Mateo/San Francisco) today welcome news that Ngawang Sangdrol, a Tibetan nun and Tibet's longest serving female political prisoner, was granted a visa by authorities of the People's Republic of China (PRC) to travel to the United States. Congressman Lantos personally protested Sangdrol's imprisonment in face-to-face meetings with Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing and Chinese Vice Premier Li Lanqing during a trip to Beijing, China in January 2002. Since then, Congressman Lantos worked closely with U.S. Ambassador to the PRC Clark Randt to secure Sangdrol's release.

"I welcome the release of Ngawang Sangdrol, and am grateful our efforts throughout the last year to secure her freedom proved successful. Having spent most of the last 16 years in Chinese jails for publicly calling for a free Tibet, Ngawang Sangdrol was Tibet's longest-serving political prisoner. Although she was released from prison last October, she was denied a visa to travel. Not until allowed to travel to the United States today was she truly free. I deeply appreciate this gesture by the Chinese, and am grateful for Ambassador Clark Randt's assistance in securing it. I urge the Chinese to make further progress in releasing political prisoners and restoring the human rights of its citizens," Congressman Lantos said.

Born in 1967, Ngawang Sangdrol is from Garu Nunnery in Tibet. She was first arrested in 1987, when she was ten years old, for participating in peaceful protest demonstrations, and was detained 15 days. On August 28, 1990, she was arrested and held at the Gutsa detention center for again participating in a protest demonstration. Sangdrol was released in late 1991 after being subjected to severe beatings, only to be arrested again in June 1992 for "subversive and separatist" activities. Her sentence had been extended repeatedly for smuggling recordings of independence songs and poems out of prison, for shouting "Free Tibet," and for participating in the Drapchi prisoner protest in May 1998. She was released from prison October 17, 2002, but was denied a visa to travel. Ngawang Sangdrol had been due to be released in 2013 at the age of 36.

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